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held on
Monday, 13 June 1994
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 67th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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1 July 1994

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

United Nations telecommunications system (A/48/7/Add.9; A/C.5/48/11/Rev.1 and Corr.1)

Revised estimates under sections 10, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19: Decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy (A/C.5/48/76)

1. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) noted that the subject of the telecommunications system had been under consideration by the Advisory Committee for some time. The current system - a mixture of old and new, partly owned and partly rented - had a number of shortcomings, in particular high cost and the inability to serve the United Nations adequately on a world-wide basis, for example in terms of communications with peace-keeping operations. Some of the facilities, such as the alternate voice and data (AVD) circuits, were not available for voice and data transmission on a 24-hour basis.

2. The Secretary-General was proposing the establishment of seven Earth stations at various locations, with a European hub station, and the upgrading of the New York Earth station. The current system would thus be expanded and upgraded, and there would be a move from INMARSAT to INTELSAT facilities.

3. The Advisory Committee had considered the cost-effectiveness of the proposals and, notwithstanding the weakness of some of the information provided, had concluded that implementation of the project would be beneficial and would lead to savings, in view of which it was recommending approval of the proposal. The costs would be shared between the budgets of peace-keeping operations and the activities funded by the regular budget, in which connection the Advisory Committee had requested the Secretary-General to develop a simple formula for the equitable apportionment of those costs, taking into account usage and volume of traffic.

4. As noted in paragraph 34 of its report (A/48/7/Add.9), the Advisory Committee was not recommending any additional appropriations at the current stage. The matter could be addressed again in future submissions by the Secretary-General.

5. With respect to the question of revised estimates in connection with the decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy, the Advisory Committee was recommending that, should the proposals be approved, the transfers between sections should take place as proposed by the Secretary-General. The transfers would be reflected in the first performance report for the biennium 1994-1995.

6. Ms. THOMPSON (Director of General Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations telecommunications system (A/C.5/48/11/Rev.1 and Corr.1), said that improvements in the telecommunications network would improve communications capacity in the area of peace-keeping and would assist in everyday management. The proposals, which had been reviewed by technical experts, were cost-effective and would generate savings. Interest in using an upgraded network had been expressed by the specialized agencies. Acceptance of the proposals would make more efficient use of the large Earth station at New York, thus increasing the yield from the investment already made. The location of the European hub had not been finalized, but would be at Geneva or Vienna.

7. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy (A/C.5/48/76), said that the Secretary-General was interested in bringing the United Nations closer to Member States, and had established a task force to review the question of which Headquarters activities could be handled more efficiently by the regional commissions. It had been concluded that advisory services could usefully be transferred, together with responsibility and resources in the fields of natural resources and energy.

8. The recommendation relating to advisory services had been implemented in the programme budget for 1994-1995, but it had not been possible to incorporate the second element in time. The report before the Committee reflected further consultations between Headquarters and the regional commissions, and had been prepared on the basis of criteria adopted by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It had been concluded that there should be a single integrated technical cooperation programme, with implementation by the Department for Development Support and Management Services or the regional commissions on the basis of comparative advantage. As a result, as indicated in the report, it was proposed to redeploy nine Professional and nine General Service posts from the Department to the regional commissions. A critical core of six Professional posts would be retained at Headquarters. In view of the delay occasioned by the consultation process, it was the Secretary-General's hope that the proposals now before the Committee were acceptable and that they could be implemented with effect from 1 July 1994.

9. Mr. BOIN (France) said that the proposals, which would appear to result in savings of $277,500, were from the financial viewpoint welcome to Member States. Nevertheless it was his understanding that there were some reservations in the Second Committee regarding the desirability of the transfer of responsibilities to the regional commissions, in view of which he asked whether the Second Committee had reached any decision on the matter, and thus whether the Fifth Committee had a legislative basis on which to proceed.

10. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that his delegation had no difficulties with the Secretary-General's proposals on decentralization, which appeared to be the only tangible result so far of restructuring as it affected activities in the field.

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

11. His delegation was, however, somewhat troubled by the comments made on the telecommunications system. The Committee was being told that a very expensive project would, in effect, be virtually cost-free. Moreover, the very late issuance of the Advisory Committee's report seemed to have little justification outside the peak period of the Assembly. His delegation objected strongly to being obliged to work on a Secretariat schedule that displayed total disregard for Member States.

12. The claim that savings would result from the expansion and upgrading of the current telecommunications system should be treated with scepticism, bearing in mind the unfortunate history of the Integrated Management Information System, whose costs had increased from an original figure of some $29 million to over $80 million. Such cost escalation seemed to be a general problem at the United Nations, where projects presented as cost-effective overran original estimates and were considerably less user-friendly than the systems they replaced. The Secretary-General's proposals assumed a certain level of peace-keeping activities that his delegation did not regard as being accurate. The potential for cost-savings was certainly not apparent from the information presented.

13. The Organization's communications problems were not due to a lack of equipment but to a lack of decision-making capacity at Headquarters, a problem which the proposals would do nothing to overcome. No expansion of the telecommunications capacity would, for example, offset the lack of a current telephone directory, the issuance of which would represent a much better investment in terms of improving communications at the Organization. In that connection he asked when a new telephone directory would in fact be issued.

14. Notwithstanding the claims made by the Director of General Services, it would be appropriate for Member States to have an opportunity to have the proposals scrutinized by their own technical experts. A further curiosity was that, at a time of financial stringency, the Secretariat felt no hesitation in proposing additional major expenditure. It was hard to see that cost-savings would accrue in view of the requirement of 54 posts for the operation and maintenance of the Earth stations. He recalled that the current system was not very old, and that the Committee had been assured at its inception that it was adequate for the Organization's needs. It would be preferable to seek savings through contract negotiations with suppliers of current telecommunications services.

15. The figures indicated in the comparative table of telephone rates in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/48/7/Add.9, annex II) were somewhat surprising. It appeared, for example, that the published commercial rate for calls to Somalia was $4.91, whereas the discount commercial rate was $8.41. An explanation of the apparently anomalous figures in the table would be most welcome.

16. In brief, his delegation was strongly opposed to the proposals, which would simply establish a cumbersome system with too much capacity, and would not generate savings.

17. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) agreed with the representative of the United States regarding the issuance of a telephone directory, and supported the comments made by the representative of France with respect to decentralization. With respect to paragraph 10 of the Secretary-General's report on decentralization (A/C.5/48/76), he asked why no transfer of posts seemed to be taking place even though responsibilities were being transferred. Where posts were to be transferred, he asked what impact that had on the incumbent of a post at Headquarters, and whether that individual would also be transferred or needed to seek a new post. Lastly, it seemed that no other organ, such as the Committee for Programme and Coordination or the Second Committee, had considered the question of decentralization, an aspect that needed to be pursued.

18. Mr. STITT (United Kingdom) said that Governments were justified in their caution in endorsing major capital projects proposed by the Secretariat. The proposed telecommunications system would restructure the flow of management information inside the United Nations system and between the managers of peace-keeping operations and field operations. Members should be conscious, however, that management involved not simply flows of information, but taking decisions. Nothing in the proposal showed that the management of peace-keeping operations would be improved through a volume increase in the information flow. He hoped that the Secretariat would address management quality as well as volume of information. The units dealing with the administration of peace-keeping operations were already swamped by the flow of information, and there was no assurance that the process would improve cost-effectiveness rather than damage it.

19. Several lessons could be drawn from recent experience with the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) on ensuring satisfactory project management. The documents as submitted did not provide a clear explanation of the technical difficulties of the project, which had been developed essentially in-house with limited external technical consultation, mainly through the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). The proposal must be carefully drawn and proper control maintained on the variation of parameters during its implementation, particularly in a field where technology was changing rapidly. More information from the Secretariat on its technical aspects would be welcome.

20. Some questions arose, furthermore, about the role of the Secretariat as operator and prime user of the telecommunications system, in relation to other United Nations bodies. Members should be supplied with the information that ACABQ had used to provide justification, in paragraph 17 of its report (A/48/7/Add.9), for the fact that there would be no recovery of capital costs from the spec alized agencies. Clearly, major telecommunications obligations were carried by other parts of the United Nations system, and any new developments should be made available to them as well. That paragraph appeared to be an attempt to halt the discussion. Moreover, if the United Nations was to become the manager of a system, the costs of which were being recovered beyond the United Nations Secretariat, its management structure and policies must be addressed. The 1 per cent charge to be levied on third-party users seemed trivial. Care should be taken to avoid the creation of a supra-national telecommunications operator. An urgent decision was needed on that matter, but the necessary information was not yet available.

21. Mr. MERIFIELD (Canada) said, with regard to decentralization, that it was unclear which functions came under section 20 of the regular budget and which were funded under support costs, most of which were extrabudgetary.

22. There was also some confusion over the role of substantive support. Paragraph 10 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/C.5/48/76) noted the transfer of certain responsibilities to UNEP and UNCTAD, yet no posts had actually been moved. Furthermore, the role of the Department of Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) did not appear to have been reduced, as the resources allocated for water and minerals had not been moved either to UNEP or UNCTAD. From the document, it appeared that the amount of resources given to DDSMS had been too high, since it could perform with nine fewer Professional posts; that might be an argument for their suppression.

23. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said, with regard to the proposals for decentralization, that those efforts had arisen out of concerns expressed by the Secretariat and Member States. The Secretary-General had identified areas where more could be done at the regional level through discussions with an interdepartmental task force and the regional commissions. The first proposal for transfer of responsibility and resources, under section 20 of the budget, had changed the allocation to 60 per cent for regional offices and 40 per cent for Headquarters. That proposal had been approved by the General Assembly and implemented. Consultations regarding a second proposal had not been completed at that time, and conclusions had been reached early in the year. The 15 Professional posts in DDSMS were considered "frozen posts" because their allocations had not yet been finalized, but they were being kept in the budget. The proposal was to divide the posts among the Secretariat units with responsibility in those areas, since it had been decided to maintain a minimum core staff at Headquarters. The purpose of decentralization was to improve programme delivery. Financial savings would be welcome, but were not the key consideration.

24. Regarding intergovernmental involvement in the issue, the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation (E/1993/85) had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its 1993 Summer session. The Council had welcomed the report, had agreed to strengthen the work of the Organization at the regional level and had urged the Secretary-General to continue his efforts. In line with the mandate from the Member States, the General Assembly, at its forty-eighth session, had taken appropriate action.

25. In the report of the Secretary-General, paragraph 10 was not referring to a transfer of functions, but a designation of offices as focal points in the areas of water and minerals. Since the intention was to transfer more staff resources to the regional commissions, an incumbent in a post would be transferred whenever possible, to the regional commission. The grading structure had been based on a careful review of the required expertise. It was quite true that some of the regional commissions already had strong programmes in those areas; decentralization efforts represented a modest effort to strengthen them.

26. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said, with reference to paragraph 10, that it would be difficult for UNCTAD, within its allocated resources, to take on additional responsibility for minerals. Its problem with resources had been repeatedly brought to the attention of the General Assembly. The decision of the Economic and Social Council with regard to regionalization was a sensitive issue, involving the third phase of restructuring.

27. Mr. CLAVIJO (Colombia), referring to document A/C.5/48/76, said that the Fifth Committee would need to seek guidance from the Second Committee concerning the proposals contained in the document, particularly those relating to the decentralization of activities in the fields of natural resources and energy. His delegation had always supported measures to ensure greater involvement on the part of countries receiving technical cooperation, and it had no objection to the proposals provided that they did not affect resource availability at Headquarters. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had a number of comparative advantages; there was a need to ensure that it also had adequate resources.

28. With regard to water resources, it was his understanding that activities in that area had been coordinated by a working group consisting of representatives of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development; the Secretariat should explain how the decision to entrust those responsibilities to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as reflected in paragraph 10 of document A/C.5/48/76, would affect the existing division of labour.

29. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that what was at issue was not a transfer of resources, but the designation of an office to act as a focal point. UNCTAD had the strongest programme in the mineral resources sector. The Department for Development Support and Management Services would require one Professional post because the Committee on Natural Resources was responsible for reviewing the programme.

30. The decision to entrust to UNEP global responsibilities for water did not mean that other bodies would have no input in that area. As to the status of the working group to which the Colombian representative had referred, he was unable to answer that question for the time being, but would do so at a later date.

31. Ms. THOMPSON (Director of General Services), replying to questions raised concerning the proposed United Nations telecommunications system (A/C.5/48/11/Rev.1 and Corr.1 and A/48/7/Add.9), said that the difficulties involved in preparing a new United Nations telephone directory were not of a technical nature, but had to do with the ongoing restructuring of the Organization, which made successive versions obsolete as soon as they were issued. It was to be hoped that a preliminary version representing at least the upper levels of each department could be issued in July.

32. She was uncertain as to how to reply to the United States representative. She did not share the assumption that the level of peace-keeping activities

(Ms. Thompson)

would decrease; in her view, it could only increase. With regard to satellite technology, it was not the dishes which were easily outdated, but the computers; however, the computers were usually modular and could be updated.

33. The number of new posts requested by the Secretariat was 29, not 54.

34. The United Nations was charged $0.85 per minute for use of the leased-line network. The peace-keeping operations paid $6.50 per minute to use the facilities of the International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT); the Secretariat wished to phase out that arrangement and switch to a type of technology that would result in lower costs. The Field Operations Division was convinced that the costs of the satellite network would be recouped within two years.

35. The cost of the leased-line network was renegotiated every other year; in areas where there were no direct lines, the United Nations paid the same rate as the United States Government.

36. The comments made by the United Kingdom representative concerning the project management structure were valid; her Department had assigned a senior staff member to the project and would continue to strengthen it.

37. The technological innovations introduced into the Office of Conference Services had resulted in absolute savings by reducing the number of temporary posts needed for the General Assembly.

38. As indicated in paragraph 15 of document A/C.5/48/11/Rev.1, other organizations of the United Nations system which wished to use the satellite network would be charged 1 per cent over and above the basic rate. The seven satellite dishes would be justified on the basis of the needs of the United Nations alone.

39. Telecommunications technology had not been introduced into the Organization at a very fast rate. The satellite network had been under consideration since 1984. The United Nations offices at Addis Ababa and Nairobi continued to be at a disadvantage because of the lack of digital technology.

40. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) said that he had difficulties with the information just provided. He requested the Secretariat to specify the amount invested in telecommunications since 1984; clearly, some upgrading had taken place.

41. Any suggestion that his delegation was resisting progress by failing to approve the proposal under consideration was unacceptable. In particular, the reference to Addis Ababa and Nairobi was designed to incite frictions between his country and the two countries concerned. It would be helpful if the Secretariat could make proposals for improving telecommunications in those areas without the new system.

(Mr. Michalski, United States)

42. He would also be grateful for information on the costs of transferring data or making telephone calls to any of the regions mentioned in the proposal. It was doubtful whether the experts whose views were cited had read all of the background documentation.

43. It was difficult to say no to anything in the United Nations. His delegation could no longer tolerate having such proposals presented to it and then coming under pressure to believe everything that it was told by the Secretariat, nor could it accept the willingness of Member States to approve any proposals that came before them.

44. With regard to the number of new posts, he drew attention to table 1 of document A/C.5/48/11/Rev.1, which called for a total of 54 staff. While 29 of those posts were to be funded from the regular budget, it was unclear where the other 25 would come from.

45. The Director of General Services had stated that the question of a 1 per cent add-on charge for use of the network would be discussed in informal consultations. However, in paragraph 17 of its report (A/48/7/Add.9), the Advisory Committee indicated that such an arrangement was neither technically nor legally feasible. The Secretariat was undermining its own credibility by ignoring the Advisory Committee's recommendations.

46. Furthermore, he failed to understand why, if the project was as beneficial and cost-efficient as was claimed, it had been delayed so long. Perhaps, as stated by the Director of General Services, the proposal had been the subject of much discussion in the Secretariat, but it had not been thoroughly vetted by Member States. His delegation was unable to accept the proposal based on the information provided in the Secretary-General's report.

47. Moreover, his delegation had never endorsed the assumption that the number of peace-keeping operations would decrease, nor was there any change in its commitment to peace-keeping. His Government was chiefly concerned with the inadequacy of the cost-benefit analysis conducted by the Secretariat.

48. The CHAIRMAN said that the matter would remain under discussion.

Special representatives, envoys and related positions (continued)
(A/C.5/48/L.70)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.70

49. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh), Rapporteur, introducing draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.70, said that it represented the outcome of informal consultations. After drawing attention to paragraphs 3, 4 and 5, he recommended the draft resolution for adoption without a vote.

50. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.70 was adopted.

51. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of agenda item 123.

AGENDA ITEM 133: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA (continued) (A/C.5/48/L.69)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.69

52. Mrs. EMERSON (Portugal), Vice-Chairman, introducing draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.69, which had been submitted by the Chairman following informal consultations, drew attention to paragraphs 1, 3, 4 and 7. Paragraph 8 authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments for the maintenance of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara at a rate not to exceed $3.4 million gross per month for the period from 1 August to 30 September 1994, the said amount to be utilized from the unencumbered balance of appropriations. In that connection, she pointed out that the said balance did not reflect the contributions paid to the Committee, a matter which the Committee would need to discuss. The draft resolution was recommended for adoption without a vote.

53. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.69 was adopted.

54. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America), explaining his delegation's position on the draft resolution just adopted, said that the United States had been able to join the consensus on the measure because of the inclusion of paragraph 4, which requested the Secretary-General to report, within 30 days, on the full implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Committee approved by the General Assembly in resolution 48/250, as well as the recommendations approved in the current resolution. His delegation looked forward to receiving that report, which would have a major impact on his Government's future position on the financing of peace-keeping operations. An even more fundamental issue was involved, namely, the right of Member States under Article 17 of the Charter to have control over the resources and budget of the United Nations.

AGENDA ITEM 168: PERSONNEL QUESTIONS (continued)

Amendments to the Staff Rules: Report of the Secretary-General (continued) (A/C.5/48/37 and Add.1)

Appointments of limited duration: the new 300 series (A/C.5/48/CRP.2)

55. Ms. DODSON (Director of Personnel) said that reference to a comprehensive grade-by-grade review had been removed from the Report of the Secretary-General on amendments to the staff rules (A/C.5/48/37) and been replaced by the new system of continuous review. Except for special service agreements, there were currently no contractual mechanisms which could be used by the Organization to rapidly mobilize and deploy personnel. The amended 300 series provided for two types of non-career appointments: short-term appointments of up to six months for conference and other short-term services and appointments of limited duration, which were not expected to last more than three years, and,

(Ms. Dodson)

exceptionally, four years; the latter were intended for activities ranging from election monitoring and peacemaking to technical cooperation and humanitarian operations. It should be noted that document A/C.5/48/37/Add.1 amended the rules to remove the three-month minimum limitation on appointments of limited duration.

56. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that the personnel question should be considered at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly especially since the Joint Inspection Unit was scheduled to submit at that session a detailed study on all issues relating to personnel policies including those which covered hiring practices. She wondered how the Secretariat planned to take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution in the hiring of staff under the new series. The Committee could take a position on that proposal after it had analysed in depth all the policies related to the recruitment of personnel at the forty-ninth session. Her delegation wondered why the Fifth Committee was considering an issue which seemed to have been decided upon by the Secretary-General. It wished to know how that action related to intergovernmental decisions taken on policies and changes in policies governing recruitment of personnel.

57. Mr. ORLOV (Russian Federation) said that none of the existing staff rules made it possible to promptly solve, with a minimum of expenditure, the problems relating to the recruitment of staff to serve on the growing number of United Nations peace-keeping operations. The new drafting of the series 300 rules did not clarify matters. He did not fully understand the distinction between short-term appointments and appointments of limited duration. Staff on appointments of limited duration should be put into a separate series. He also had doubts about the scope of the rules for contracts of limited duration and wondered whether staff in that category included field technical cooperation personnel. He did not see any difference in the criteria for such personnel and those that came under the 200 series. Such criteria were needed in view of the differences in remuneration. Moreover, his delegation had serious reservations about the provisions for the participation of staff under the 300 series in the United Nations Pension Fund as such staff would not, by virtue of their period of service, be entitled to pensions. In that connection, administrative expenditures as well as personnel costs would undoubtedly increase. It would therefore be useful for the Secretariat to undertake a comparative analysis of the expenditures of the Organization relating to the participation and non-participation of staff in the Pension Fund.

58. Mr. KHENE (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that since it was highly unlikely that a decision would be taken at the current meeting, the whole issue should be postponed and taken up at another meeting of the Committee.

59. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) said that he would like to know the position of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) on the question. Since the Secretariat needed to have staff rules to cope with the increasing number of short-term contracts, the proposed rules could be approved on a temporary basis pending their in-depth consideration at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly, at which time the Committee would also probably have the ICSC report.

60. Mr. SHARP (Australia) said that his delegation would, in principle, support the new 300 series if its intention was to give the Secretariat greater flexibility. However, the role of the Fifth Committee must be clarified; if it was expected to approve those amendments, a statement on programme budget implications would be required. Like the representative of Germany, he would welcome any information concerning the ICSC position on the issue.

61. Mr. BOIN (France) said that he understood that the Committee was merely being asked to take note of the proposal. Under Article 101 of the Charter, the Committee had the power and duty of approval concerning rules governing United Nations staff. He sought some clarification regarding the employer's contribution to the pensions of such staff. His delegation would prefer an ad hoc arrangement that reconciled the need for flexibility in dealing with staff under the 300 series with the Committee's obligation to discharge its responsibility properly. The issue should be examined at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly when the Committee would also have the input of ICSC.

62. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) said that new regulations were needed to accommodate the changes that had occurred in the Organization, especially in the peace-keeping areas. She wondered whether the Office of Legal Affairs had been involved in the drafting of the 300 series and whether four-year appointments might not be too long for limited duration staff. Her delegation would appreciate some more information on the policy that would be used in the implementation of the 300 series. She agreed with the Australian delegation that a statement on programme budget implications might be necessary, and supported the involvement of ICSC and the postponement of the debate to the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

63. Ms. GRAHAM (United States of America) said that it was important to address problems concerning hiring procedures for the protection of both the Organization and staff to be covered under the new series. While there was an upper limit of four years per contract, it was not clear whether limited duration staff might not work for their entire careers on several series 300 contracts. In that connection, she wondered what the obligations or liabilities of the Organization towards staff in such specific situations were.

64. Ms. BONIS (Netherlands) asked the Secretariat to provide more information on the criteria for choosing the types of contract granted, particularly in the field of technical cooperation.

65. The CHAIRMAN said that if he heard no objection he would take it that the Committee wished to recommend to the General Assembly that it should postpone the consideration of the question to the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly.

66. It was so decided.

67. Ms. DODSON (Director of Personnel) said that the issue would definitely be considered again at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The staff rules were currently being used by UNDP, and the Secretariat would like to use them at least for local staff on major peace-keeping operations. The Secretariat's procedures in that regard would be based essentially on regulations 12.2 and 12.3. There was a dire need for new staff rules to replace the current costly system of special service agreements used to hire short-term staff primarily for peace-keeping operations. On the average, appointments under the 300 series would save between $10,000 and $20,000 a year per staff member.

68. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) said that decisions regarding staff rules must be brought before the General Assembly where their programme budget implications could be considered.

69. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the present sub-item of agenda item 138 and invited the Rapporteur to report directly thereon to the General Assembly.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

FIFTH COMMITTEE
68th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 21 June 1994
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 68th MEETING

Chairman: MR. HADID (Algeria)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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AGENDA ITEM 123: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued)

OTHER MATTERS

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 123: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1994-1995 (continued) (A/C.5/48/L.71 and L.73)

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.71

1. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh), Rapporteur, introduced draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.71, entitled "Africa: critical economic situation, recovery and development", and said that since it was a consensus resolution he would recommend that the Committee should adopt it without a vote.

2. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

3. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.71 was adopted without a vote.

4. Mr. BEN HAMIDA (Tunisia), supported by Mr. STITT (United Kingdom), sought assurances from the Controller that the Secretariat would be in a position to prepare the draft programme budget section requested under paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.71.

5. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretariat had already started preparing the draft programme budget section requested in paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.721 and that it would be ready no later than 10 July 1994. The Secretariat was doing its utmost to meet deadlines and to provide all the reports of the Secretary-General to the Committee.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of that phase of the agenda item and requested the Rapporteur to report thereon direct to the General Assembly.

Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.73

7. Ms. ROTHEISER (Austria) introduced draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.73, entitled "Decentralization of activities and resources in the fields of energy and natural resources", and expressed the hope that it would be adopted without a vote.

8. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objections, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

9. Draft resolution A/C.5/48/L.73 was adopted without a vote.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee had concluded its consideration of the item, and he requested the Rapporteur to report thereon to the General Assembly.

OTHER MATTERS

11. Mr. MADDENS (Belgium), reporting on informal consultations with respect to the preparation of a draft resolution on agenda item 121 "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", said that nine meetings had been held to date and that work would continue with a view to the adoption of a consensus text.

12. Mr. MICHALSKI (United States of America) asked whether the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had completed its review of the report on staff assessment and when that report and that issue would be put on the Fifth Committee's agenda. He also wondered whether the Secretariat could not prevail upon the Board of Auditors to provide the Fifth Committee with a brief interim report on the status of the special audit of peace-keeping procurement. Concerning the disappearance of $3.9 million in cash from one peace-keeping operation, it would be in the best interests of the United Nations for the Secretariat to provide Member States with the information that it had gathered so far on the matter.

13. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Advisory Committee's review of the report on staff assessment had already taken place. Concerning the matter of the missing funds raised by the United States delegation, it was still under investigation and he hoped that the Secretariat would soon be in a position to report officially thereon.

14. Mrs. RODRIQUEZ (Cuba), referring to administrative instruction ST/AI/395 of 2 June 1994 on appointments of limited duration, urged the Secretariat to explain at the next formal meeting why it had apparently disregarded the Fifth Committee's decision on the matter.

The meeting rose at 4.06 p.m.